

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

Please replace pending Claims 54 and 55 with the following corresponding amended claims (See also, *Attachment*):

AI Claim 54 (amended). The system of claim 46, wherein the mechanism which brings the opened ends into contact is mechanically actuated.

Claim 55 (amended). The system of claim 54, wherein the mechanical actuation is automated.

In the Drawings:

Applicants have addressed the drawing objections set forth in the Draftperson's Drawing Review (Form PTO-948). Corrected formal drawings are being submitted with this Reply.

REMARKS

Claims 1-56 are pending in this Application, with Claims 18-33 withdrawn from consideration due to an election made by Applicants in response to the Examiner's restriction requirement. Therefore, Claims 1-17 and 34-56 are at issue.

Of the remaining pending claims, Claims 54 and 55 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, Claims 1-3, 14-17, 34-36 and 46-47 have been initially rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,157,723 to Granzow et al. ("Granzow"), and under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) Claims 4-7, 37-40 and 48-49 have been initially rejected as being unpatentable over Granzow in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,414,267 to Wakalopulos ("Wakalopulos"), and Claims 8-13, 41-45 and 50-56 have been initially rejected as unpatentable over Granzow in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,645,796 to Caputo et al. ("Caputo").